

PEPS: Kennedy, John F.

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SIHANOUK, WHO SHOCKED U. S., NOW LAUDS KENNEDY

From Cable Dispatches

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, whose government shocked the United States last December with a broadcast viewed as gloating over President Kennedy's assassination, yesterday praised Mr. Kennedy as "a man of rectitude and courage" with whose passing "a light went out that I fear . . . will not shine again for many years."

The Cambodian Chief of State, whose regime later disavowed any intent to slur the late President, issued his laudatory statement in response to a request from Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy for his participation in recorded programs for the projected Kennedy Memorial Library in Boston.

Prince Sihanouk said President Kennedy's speeches "had an authentic ring of greatness."

"We followed with sympathy and attention his efforts to lessen world tensions and particularly to come to an understanding with the Soviet Union in regard to suspension of nuclear explosions, and although my government found itself unable to subscribe to the agreement finally come to, this should not be ascribed to any failure on our part to recognize the importance of such an achievement," the Cambodian leader said.

The statement also praised the late President's efforts in behalf of racial equality and his handling of the Cuban crisis in 1961-62.

Referring to the abortive Bay of Pigs attack by Cuban exiles, Prince Sihanouk said President Kennedy's "refusal to involve American armed forces directly in the attack on a neighboring country showed him to be a man of rectitude and courage."

"You may rest assured," the Prince's statement to Attorney General Kennedy concluded, "that your

brother's death was sincerely mourned by the people of Cambodia."

Washington interpreted the term "great boss" as a derogatory reference to President Kennedy and ordered U. S. Ambassador Phillip D. Sproule home "for consultations."

Prince Sihanouk, who earlier had renounced further American aid with the charge that the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency was plotting to oust him, recalled his own envoy from Washington and broke off negotiations with U. S. authorities in Cambodia "because of the deliberate stalling . . . in the search for acceptable solutions . . . for the liquidation of American aid."

The December incident came during a Cambodia "hate week" when, a State Department spokesman in Washington said, a Cambodian government broadcast apparently rejoiced at the deaths of state "enemies" in Thailand (Premier Sarit Thanarat) and South Viet Nam (President Ngo Dinh Diem), along with "the great boss of these aggressors."